

MANCHESTER TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Manchester Township Hall, 275 S. Macomb, Manchester, Michigan 48158

Regular Meeting May 6, 2021

8:00 p.m.

A. CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIR

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mike Walter, John Seefeld, George Daubner, Dave Thompson, Michelle Stace, and Doug Brooks

Members Absent: Sybil Kolon

Notetaker: Nathan Booth

Others Present: Ron Milkey (8700 Sharon Hollow Rd.), Barry Kenyon and Tanya Keller (6949 Suncrest Dr. Saline MI 48176), Silas Bialecki (11983 Noggles Rd. Manchester MI 48158), Mary Goode (16866 Wellwood Rd. Tipton MI 49287), Thom Dumano-PEA Group (4927 Nemco Way Suite 115 Brighton MI 48116)

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Daubner with a second by Seefeld to approve the agenda as amended. All ayes. Motion carried.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Daubner with a second by Thompson to approve the minutes of the March 4th meeting as amended. The amendment was to change "Virtual" meeting to on site/in person meeting. All ayes. Motion carried.

D. PUBLIC COMMENT --- (Limit to 2 minutes, please state name and address)

There are no comments at this time.

E. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

I. Report of Chairperson

Walter- I would like to thank Doug and Michelle for stepping up as new members.

II. Report of Township Board Representative

There was a discussion of the Township Board Meeting. Minutes of the meeting are on file.

III. Report of Zoning Board of Appeals

There has not been a meeting.

IV. Report of Planning Consultant

There is nothing to report at this time.

V. Reports of Committees

i. SWWCOG

There has not been a meeting.

ii. Joint Planning Commission

There has not been a meeting.

VI. Correspondence

Walter- I have received an email from Doni McLennan, thanking the commission and the township for the opportunity to serve.

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

I. Sow Goods Farms Site Plan Review

Tom (Sow Good Farms rep.)- We are looking at 154 acres on Lemm Road within the township. The majority of that land will be for farming vegetables. The intent is to put in an all season growing and processing center. We are trying to separate the greenhouse from surrounding residents to protect them from light. We will start out with 10 greenhouses, a main office area, a small teaching facility, and processing and storage barns. There will not be any sales on the property, meaning all wholesale. On site we grow, clean, process, and ship produce for distribution.

Daubner- What are the sizes of the greenhouses?

Thom- They are 30 by 84 each. The greenhouses will take up a very small portion of the property. Al together there will be just over 7 acres total of greenhouses.

Brooks- Is there any wetland within the property?

Thom- There are a few spots, but we are going to stay away from them as a developing standpoint.

Walter- What happened to using storage containers?

Thom- We shyed away from using shipping containers.

Enos- Most of this project is under the right to farm act. The reason we are here is because of the greenhouses. The greenhouses will be ran 24/7, and this property is in the rural of the township with pretty dark skies. We just want to make sure it doesnt effect the character of the area.

Tasha- There is a solution to the light. We are looking to use black screening to block the light from the greenhouse at nighttime. What we dont want to do is ruin the environment. Which will cover the ceilings of the greenhouse. This solution is being used world wide. With the screen, you will not be able to see the glow from the greenhouses.

Enos- If the commission is comfortable with the plan of the other uses tonight we can condition this on for further review of the screening. The screening is a big deal because we want to be able to protect our residents and dark skies.

Tasha- My goal is to do everything I can to protect the environment.

Enos- I have a few questions for you guys. We will need to get outside approval from the road commission, drain commission, and the fire department. You will also need to look into permits for irrigation systems. Do you know how big of a well you will need?

Tasha- No we do not at this point.

Thom- we will consult the county about the irrigation.

Tasha- we plan on using as little water as possible. We will only be watering the greenhouses, not the fields.

Walter- We discussed previously that there will be some dark periods of time where the greenhouses would not be lit.

Tasha- That is still correct. The plants will not require light 24/7, but the issue was for the Winter months where there is less sun.

Walter- Since the last time we talked, we gained a few new members. Would you like to give a brief overview on the proposed plan?

Tasha- I am the owner of Sow Good Farms. We will be growing fruits and vegetables. 25% of the produce we grow will be sold via CSA boxes and delivered on Wednesdays to food insecure areas. The rest of the produce that is grown will be sent to our manufacturing plant, to be manufactured into food for people who can not swallow. There will not be a farmers market or general public on the property. Our goal is to grow fruits and vegetables as organic as possible. We also want to heal the soil and water.

Enos- One thing that I appreciated was the educational backing of this use. The farm will allow students to come out and learn about agriculture.

Tasha- Yes, and due to Covid-19 we will also have an online platform where students and others can go to to learn about everything that we do. There will also be a small kitchen on the premises where our chef will be video taping to teach others how to prepare incredible meals.

Enos- You are also doing a few other projects in the area, correct?

Tasha Yes. manchester is my pilot but we also have two other farms in the county and a farm in Covert that is dedicated to berries. I am very excited to get started. We currently have 480 people interested in the CSA boxes.

Walter- At this time if there is no other questions from the commissioners, I would like to open the discussion to the public.

Mary Goode (16866 Wellwood Rd. Tipton MI 49287) Will they welcome visitors to see the operation?

Tasha- We will have a lot of work to do, maybe eventually down the road we will have tours.

Walter- [Enos] What is your recommendation?

Enos- I would recommend approval of the site plan with the conditions of: attaining Washtenaw County and other outside approval, clarify size of irrigation well which can be done through the county, clarify lighting, signage, attain fire department approval, prioritize conservation of woodlands and wetlands. If the commission is comfortable with the conditions, we could approve it. We would need clarification of the screening at the next meeting though. I think it is a great use of the property while attaining the rural character.

Seefeld- Could we get a sample of the screening?

Tasha- Yes I ask the company to provide a sample of the material and ship it to the commission.

Enos- This is just a site plan. Again, most of the operation is permitted under the right to farm act. If they want to make changes they will need to come back and approve it with us. With the approval they can move forward with retaining the outside approvals, and once we are comfortable with the lighting situation they can finally be done.

Walter- Is there any final discussion on this?

Seefeld- How is the screening mounted? Is it to the ceiling?

Thom- It will be mounted inside closer to the plants than the ceiling.

Seefeld- Will it be on the walls?

Thom- No it is not on the side walls. Just right over the plants.

Seefeld- Is it a removable screen?

Thom- I am not quite sure how it works? Tasha?

Tasha- We did not go into depth in the discussion. The question is it removable, did not come up. I know they said it was super easy to install. I do not know if I would really want to move it other than possibly in the summer.

Walter- I would like to entertain a motion for the approval of the site plan with the stated stipulations.

Thompson- I am not ready. Tasha has never been here, we have talked to her once last year and now we have this big plan. I just do not feel very comfortable about it without seeing more information like the screen. I would also like to go look at it now that I know where it is. I do not think it is right to vote on it tonight

Walter- We do need more information from the petitioners based on the request. I would say we table the approval of the site plan until the next meeting so commissioners can take a look at the property and get a few extra questions answered.

Brooks- I would assume the screen could be rolled up. It is just hard to imagine it without seeing it.

Walter- We will hold a vote at the next meeting. Thank you for your presentation.

Tasha- So the only information is how the screen fabric will work and what it looks like?

Enos- Yes, for right now in regards to the lighting. Also our commissioners need some extra time to think about the plan and maybe get out to the site so they are comfortable making a decision at the next meeting.

Tasha- Is it possible to have a special meeting before June? We are running out of summer months to start planting.

Enos- Yes we could hold a special meeting. The permit does not stop you from planting. Only the greenhouses need the permit.

Tasha- Thank you for clarifying.

Walter- That project is tabled until the next meeting.

Brooks- Is it okay for us to go look at the property

Barry Kenyon (6949 Suncrest Dr. Saline MI 48176)- I am the current property owner, and yes you can definitely go look at the property. If you need my assistance let me know.

II. Thorn Lake Solar Site Plan Review

Enos- There was a webinar for residents and commissioners to joining in for information. We are intending on having a public hearing in July. There are probably going to be a lot of residents that will attend with questions. They were talking about putting the solar panels on the north and south side of Herman Road. The panels will be no higher than 8-15 feet. They will be very limited maintenance. There will be significant screening with 6 foot barbed wire fence. It will be 350 feet back from road. There will not be concrete footers. There will be reclamation questions in case the operation ever went south. The way they handled it in Grass Lake was they were able to provide information from an outside agency that said if they ever decommissioned the solar park, the money in copper, aluminum, and the equipment is pretty significant so they would pull it all. Prior to the July meeting there will be a small meeting on the operating process.

Thompson- They are planning on starting construction in 2023. The electricity will be sold to Consumers Energy. There will be shrub screening. The tax revenue to township is insignificant. Public access is prohibited and there will be remote cameras on site to monitor the property. From personal experience on my grandfathers farm, there were oil wells and when the wells were done, they didn't just disappear. Sometimes it took 20 years for them to be taken care of.

Enos- To avoid that issue, you could do a bond or you could say if it's not gone by 1 year after decommission then the township can have access to reclaim and dispose of or sell the material.

Thompson- The problem with that is, you are making an assumption on the salvage. The price of scrap steel has been \$300 per ton and \$50 per ton all in a few years time.

Enos- That is a questionable ask but we will get what we are comfortable with.

Brooks- Did they talk about how they were going to maintain the ground around the panels?

Enos- They talked about sheep or pollinating flowers.

Thompson- In the meeting I believe they said they were not going to have animals.

III. Second Homes/Tiny Houses

Walter- After the public hearing there were some requests for additional changes to the language.

Enos- The additional language changes were made. If the commission is comfortable with new and existing language there can be a vote tonight.

Daubner- There was no minimum size?

Enos- The lot size can not be any smaller than 10 acres.

Walter- The tiny house can not exceed 50% of the primary dwelling and it can not be more than 1000 sq. ft.

Enos- I really do not think we will see a lot of the tiny homes. All requests will come to us.

Thompson- It will increase the taxable value of the property.

Daubner- I just hope it is not abused.

Thomson- I do not think it will.

Walter- Every two years the home owners will have to come and get a new permit. Also if someone sells the property and tries to rent it out they would have to come to us and disclose the usage of the tiny home.

Seefeld- What if it is sold in that two years to someone else?

Enos- I do not think they will need to come for a new permit in those 2 years.

Walter- Can I get a motion for approval of the language updates for the accessory dwelling units.

A motion was made by Thompson with a second by Seefeld for approval of language changes to allow for accessory dwelling units. All ayes. Motion carried.

Walter- It is approved to send to board.

G. NEW BUSINESS

I. Election of Office

Walter- it is time for election of officers. We need a charman, vice chairman, and secretary.

A motion was made by Seefeld with a second by Thompson to appoint Mike Walter as chaiperson. All ayes. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Daubner with a second by Seefeld to appoint Dave Thompson as vice-chaiperson. All ayes. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Daubner with a second by Thompson to appoint Sybol Kolon as secretary. All ayes. Motion carried.

H. COMMENTS FROM COMISSIONERS

Walter- For those of you who want to take a look at the Sow Good Farm property, we can do so. Also if we want to do a special meeting for Sow Good Farms we just need an 18 hour notice.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT --- (Limit to 2 minutes, please state name and address)

There was a discussion on short term rentals.

NEXT MEETING: *Regular Meeting - June 3, 2021 8:00 p.m.*

J. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Thompson with a second by Seefeld to adjourn the meeting. All ayes. Motion Carried. Adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Agritourism

Event Barns